Le Meilleur Des Mondes Possibles

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/12590856.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warnings:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Implied/Referenced Suicide, Violence
Language:	English
Series:	Part 8 of Identically Different AU
Stats:	Published: 2017-11-01 Completed: 2017-11-12 Words: 2,298 Chapters: 2/2

Le Meilleur Des Mondes Possibles

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Summary

This is an extremely depressing and painful little story about two alternative universe versions of my Identically Different AU.

In one world, Will kills Hannibal in the basement and the other Hannibal beats Will to death, leaving the respective survivor to face the repercussions of his actions.

Has a happy ending, actually, but I suspect that won't make the rest of it sting much less.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

There is a universe in which Hannibal sits slumped on the edge of the cozy little twin-sized bed to which Will had so recently chained him. His hands dangle between his knees, the battered knuckles dripping blood.

Will lays unmoving on the concrete floor, just outside of the corner of Hannibal's eye. His face is caved in.

The lurid tabloid celebrity that will descend on him as soon as the news breaks will, he knows already, will be just another layer of isolation. It is such a good story - intrepid FBI agent braves serial killer's torture basement and lives to tell the tale - that he will never be able to escape it.

The hero of that story will have nothing whatsoever to do with Hannibal. Everything that happened will be rendered down into a cheap and tawdry morality play, one in which he is coercively valorized as the hero who killed the monster.

The only other person equipped to understand what happened in this room is dead now, and he is as alone as he's ever been, so Hannibal sits and watches the sluggish trickle of Will's blood dripping down the drain in the center of the room, and wonders why he didn't stop.

Hannibal knows that he could have stopped if he'd wanted to. He had been in control of his actions and fully aware of their ramifications, and yet he persisted.

Hannibal knows as well that he should go upstairs and call this in, but he dreads waking that beast because he knows once he does it will consume his life - for years, maybe even for as long as he lives - so instead he tarries with his imagination.

He spins a different story for himself - one in which he keeps his temper in check and doesn't hurt Will much more than he needs to to make sure that Will can't hurt him. Hannibal does not go easy with himself in that story - in that story, Will resents and fears him for a long time afterwards, and in it Hannibal is brought to trial and held accountable, though for a different, more deserving murder than the one he has just committed.

Though the end of the story will not come clear to Hannibal, he knows that it is happy, but the fantasy can only last for so long.

Eventually, he stands and takes the quilt from the bed. He spreads it over Will's body, taking special care to cover what remains of the face; the raw pulp reminds him forcefully of ground meat, and it is a struggle not to vomit.

Blood seeps through the fabric, staining it, as Hannibal turns and goes upstairs.

And there's another universe, and there Will sits on the edge of his own too-large bed and thinks about himself - about who and what he is and how things came to be the way that they are now and what to do next.

Will's false papers and a large amount of cash sit piled messily beside him on the bed, to his left. On the bedstand to his right lays a large syringe, filled to the top with a drug cocktail of his own devising. The dosage in the syringe is about six times larger than what he used to knock Hannibal out.

Hannibal is dead now, of course, already just so much meat in the deep freeze, but he flayed Will emotionally before he died, his insights cutting down to the bone mercilessly.

That much is bad enough, and he suspects that the emotional impact of what he has done and, more importantly, what he has learned about himself through Hannibal's words and Hannibal's death, have yet to catch up with him. He is not keen on finding out just how much worse this can all get.

But there's more -

Jack Crawford would like to talk to Will.

Jack Crawford is missing his best agent and he means to find him, and the fact that he thought of Hannibal as little more than a useful and dependable tool will not stop him from looking until he does.

Will considers the difficulties of a life on the run, how much he woud have to give up for the faint hope of maintaining a dubious freedom. He thinks about being captured, of being exposed - of having to abide the eyes of the entire world *seeing* him for what he is - and he thinks about about restraints; handcuffs, straightjackets, forced medication.

What might it be like to spend the rest of his life under the control of rotating teams of hack psychiatrists, to be picked apart by the sort of calloused incompetents who wash up at state hospitals like he is some dead thing thrown into the water for the bottom feeders?

But mostly he thinks about how calm Hannibal was under the knife, how his voice never lost that even note of absolute, stubborn certainty that he was right about everything that he had to say. Will made it last longer than he'd planned, because he'd thought that if he could make Hannibal break then all of the things that he had to say about Will's own fundamental weaknesses would become demonstratively false. But Hannibal hadn't broken, though he'd cried a little at the start and near the end, and he never stopped professing to love Will.

Will thought that if he hurt Hannibal badly enough for long enough he would have to see that he was wrong about loving Will - that beneath everything that shielded Will's true self from the world there was nothing that could be loved - but Hannibal never conceded the point, and Will is forced now to contend with the possibility that Hannibal *was* right about really loving him, and if that is true then Will knows that he has in hurting someone that loved him done something that he cannot, despite all his wickedness, survive.

He sits for a while, so far inside of himself that he would have appeared nearly catatonic to an outside observer, while his imagination spins a dozen different versions of events in which things didn't go so wrong; worlds where affection didn't move Will to share the meat with Hannibal, or where Hannibal did not recognize it for what it was, or where Will found a better way to deal with Hannibal knowing what he knew. Could the consequences of just letting Hannibal go have possibly been worse than what he is facing now?

He shakes his head, trying to clear it. None of this matters. Will knows that he isn't going to run - that there is nothing worth running for or to - but he doesn't mean to sit here and wait to be taken in, either.

So Will rolls up his sleeve and reaches for the syringe.

And in this world, here and now, Will wakes with a start and a sudden gasp to the sight of their shadowy bedroom ceiling.

He rolls onto his side and sees Hannibal, awake as well and watching him with a thoughtful intensity. There is something strained in the lines around Hannibal's eyes and a wet shimmer in the eyes themselves, and that takes Will by surprise because when he looks into Hannibal's eyes these days he usually sees reflected back a deep and abiding sense of happiness.

"Nightmare?" Will asks, and when Hannibal gives a minute nod, he says, "Yeah, me too."

Hannibal turns onto his back and says, "Come here, then," and is easy - astonishingly easy - for Will to do just that. Using Hannibal's body as a brace he pulls himself closer, laying his head on Hannibal's chest so he can hear the strong, steady beating of his heart, so familiar and comforting.

I caused that heart to stop beating, Will thinks. *I cut that heart out and would have eaten it, except that I killed myself before I had a chance to do so.*

As though he can read Will's mind, Hannibal says, "Only bad dreams. Nothing worth dwelling on."

They are sleep again soon enough, and this time they both enjoy better dreams.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> So, a few people asked me for an elaboration on the "Hannibal cries twice as Will is killing him" thing, and offered some really killer ideas to build on, so here's this.
>
> It is really, really, REALLY hard to read, guys. It's sad and it's violent and I don't know as that I recommend reading it, because I made myself feel sick at heart writing it.
>
> Please proceed with caution, and if you do go forward remember that it isn't canon....

Will understands intuitively that it is not death or even prolonged, torturous pain that Hannibal fears, and the truth of that bears out when he gives almost no reaction to being opened up. There is on his skin a thin sheen of sweat, an involuntary response that even Hannibal seems to have no control over, but Will has felt his pulse and it is slow and even. He watches Will intently, whenever he comes into Hannibal's line of vision, but his expression is unperturbed.

The only thing that Hannibal is really scared of is being eaten, and that is why when Will removes the first organ, one of the kidneys, he places it immediately on stainless steel work table that is level with Hannibal's line of sight.

Hannibal is speaking to him - speaking, not begging or pleading or bargaining. His voice is calm and even, the words slow-dripping poison, and Will tries to ignore those words and the frantic pounding of his own heart.

He looks briefly at the kidney, seemingly without response, but then he returns his gaze to Will. Hannibal watches as he trades the scalpel for a utility knife and pair of kitchen shears.

Will raises his voice over Hannibal's, and Hannibal has the good manners to listen quietly.

"Do you know how one prepares a kidney to be pan fried?" Will asks him, and he wants his voice to be conversational and relaxed, like it usually is at times like these, but he hears the strain and knows that Hannibal does, too. It makes him that much more desperate. "I'll show you."

And Will does, demonstrating as he speaks. "You trim away any fat with a sharp knife - not much here, you're astonishingly lean for a man of your age, Hannibal - and then you pull off the membrane that covers the kidney."

All of that complete, he slices the kidney in half and holds the pieces up to give Hannibal a better vantage. "See? It's just that easy."

For the first time, Hannibal turns his head away from Will, focusing his eyes on the overhead lights. There is a slight hitch of his chest, which must, Will supposes, radiate downward and hurt him at his incision, and Wills sees the tears begin to trail down the side of his face.

They are angry tears, and Hannibal's lip twitches towards a snarl as they fall.

"Hey now," Will says, in he means the sympathy to be acidic and mocking, but instead he sounds uneasy and concerned, even to his own ears.

You can stop, a small voice says from behind Will's ear. He can live without a kidney, and he's learned his lesson.

The tears don't last very long, though. Will thinks later that if they had, he might have stopped.

And anyway, Hannibal has learned nothing at all, because when he begins to speak in that calm voice again it is to indict Will for being so frightened at the idea of potentially being loved and understood that he must lash out in such a banal act of pageantry.

"You can take away *parts* of me," Hannibal tells him, and bald disgust for the first time comes into his voice. "You can hollow me out and leave me cold and dead, but it won't change how I feel or what I know. You have no control over that, Will."

"You're wrong," Will tells him. "But you'll understand that before we're done here. Don't worry about that."

But Hannibal doesn't relent. He goes on talking until there is not enough life left in him to talk anymore, and then he simply waits for it to be over with in a sullen silence. The words have been like blades under Will's skin, but the quiet is somehow worse. That silence is a guaranteer that Hannibal really isn't going to take back any of the things he has said, though Will has offered twice now to put him out of his misery if he simply concedes.

Will isn't sure how long Hannibal has been crying when he notices the new bout of tears. These are different than the ones from before; they are weak and bitter and heartbroken, and as they cut riverlets through the blood drying on Hannibal's face Will feels a tightness in his own throat.

Will looks down at Hannibal and says, "Have you finally realized you were wrong? Have you finally accepted that I can't and won't love you, now that you are dying for thinking otherwise?"
There is just barely enough strength in Hannibal for him to shake his head.
He rasps out something that Will can not understand.

Will leans in closer, holds his own breath to listen.

Blood paints the inside of Hannibal's mouth as he speaks, stains his teeth and his lips. It dribbles, untidily, down his chin.

He just barely makes out the words.

"You are also crying."

Will recoils, suddenly aware of this truth and shocked by it. He thinks wildly, *I can - I can call 911, and they'll -*

They'll what? There's not enough of Hannibal left to save, but he stands dithering, ringing his own bloody fingers, and he knows that as badly off as Hannibal is that he can still read Will's face, and sees the shame and the realization and the regret there.

Hannibal takes it as an admission of love and he smiles up at Will - an open and unguarded smile that is despite everything full of affection and more than a little smug - and Will, no longer certain if that is a mistake on Hannibal’s part, moves a little closer and lets Hannibal grip his hand as death begins at last to overtake him.

End Notes

Leibniz outlined his Perfect World Theory in five parts:

1.) God has the idea of infinitely many universes.

2.) Only one of these universes can actually exist.

3.) God's choices are subject to the principle of sufficient reason, that is, God has reason to choose one thing or another.

4.) God is good.

5.) Therefore, the universe that God chose to exist is the best of all possible worlds.

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